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SUBJECT: Ozomatli's Music and Message Attract Thousands of
Jordanians to Performances Throughout the Kingdom

¶1. SUMMARY: The three-time Grammy award-winning Los Angeles-based Latino funk and hip-hop band "Ozomatli" performed a series of concerts to highly-receptive audiences during a visit to Jordan last week, captivating more than 3000 young Jordanians during their tour of the Kingdom. Ozomatli thrilled audiences everywhere, drawing people out of their seats to "shake it up" on the dance floor. In addition to two large concerts, Ozomatli performed for hundreds of students and children at a series of outreach events at youth summer camps, a home for abused children, and a Palestinian refugee camp. The program received extensive media coverage, including television, radio, and all of the major Arabic daily newspapers. This attention-getting program supported Embassy Amman's goals of reaching diverse, young audiences throughout Jordan, and promoted MPP goals of encouraging mutual understanding and combating extremism. END SUMMARY.

YOUNG PEOPLE IN JORDAN AND AROUND THE REGION MOVED BY THE MUSIC AND THE MESSAGE

¶2. Ozomatli visited Jordan from July 23-28 as part of a Middle East tour sponsored in part by R and ECA. PA Amman proposed the tour last fall, and eventually oversaw the regional tour in cooperation with Embassies Tunis, Beirut and Cairo (Lebanon eventually had to drop out due to political turmoil). PA Amman's goal, shared by the participating posts, was to reach large audiences of youth, including many underprivileged youth, with a message of American ethnic diversity, peace and tolerance. Through direct engagement and multiplied outreach through media appearances, we achieved these goals in each country.

¶3. Ozomatli performed at two large public venues during their stay in Jordan: at the 25th Annual Jerash Festival for Culture and the Arts, and at a free concert in Aqaba. The performance at Jerash attracted approximately 800 people, and the performance in Aqaba attracted over 1,000. This turnout was much greater than expected for Aqaba, where cultural programming is rare, but less than expected for the Jerash Festival. PA Amman's inquiries after the event revealed that turnout for the Festival has been low for all of their performers this year, with fewer than 500 showing up for two very popular Arab singers who performed the same week. At both Ozomatli performances, members of the band reached out to make personal connections with the audience. They jumped off stage and performed in the center of the dance floor, chatted with the crowd, took photos, signed autographs, and went to great lengths to show that we all have more in common than we are different.

¶4. In addition to their main concerts, Ozomatli performed for hundreds of young people at a series of outreach events at youth summer camps, a home for abused children, and a Palestinian refugee camp near Jerash. Their concert at the Souf UNRWA camp marked the first time that the USG has programmed a cultural event at a Palestinian refugee camp in Jordan. UNWRA and other officials there have invited us to continue such cooperation. Children at the camp

not only loved the music, but enjoyed interacting with the band members afterward: they played basketball, asked for autographs, and performed dances for them before they departed. At the Dar Al Anda children's home for victims of domestic abuse, the director tearfully thanked the band after having watched the children dance to Ozomatli's music, clap, chant, and beg for more. She noted that she had never before seen the children react so enthusiastically to any program, and emphasized how important it was to their rehabilitation to have joyful experiences such as this.

OZOMATLI PROMOTES DIVERSITY AND TOLERANCE

¶5. At every performance, Ozomatli broke down barriers, interacting personally with their audiences, and showing by example what can be achieved when you bring diverse groups of people together. The band's incredible musical talent is influenced by their own varied ethnic and cultural background. At a time when Jordanians maintain a largely hostile attitude toward U.S. foreign policy, through this program they saw the best of America - that diversity and mutual respect makes us stronger and feeds our ideals. Not just with their music, but also with their words and actions, Ozomatli promoted American culture and values and suggested to the audience that peace and tolerance can bring people closer together. An example of Ozomatli's willingness to learn about its audiences: bassist Will Abers performed an improvised song he composed on-the-spot in Arabic at the Souf Palestinian refugee camp to delighted children.

PRESS COVERAGE

¶6. All four major Arabic dailies in Jordan reported on the Ozomatli July 26 concert at Jerash Festival on July 28. Reports were featured with color photos on the cultural news pages, and more specifically as part of a page dedicated to Jerash Festival coverage. During the two weeks leading up to the concert, all major

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newspapers ran press releases about Ozomatli's tour in the region. Ozomatli's press conference prior to the concert also received good coverage in the four Arabic dailies; Embassy PAO participated in the press conference alongside two members of Ozomatli. During the conference, this year's U.S. participation in the festival was highlighted, as well as U.S. ethnic diversity and Ozomatli's message of hope and peace and respect for world cultures. Under the headline "Ozomatli presents its performance in the South Theater," Arabic daily Ad-Dustour described Ozomatli's performance as "exceptional" and said that this was the first performance by an American band at the Jerash Festival in twenty years. The report, which was featured along with a color photo showing a dancing audience in front of the band, said that once the members of the band started "swaying," the audience began to dance and interact with them. Under the headline "Ozomatli fills the South Theater with boisterous joy," Arabic daily Al-Arab Al-Yawm said that Ozomatli has "prompted an atmosphere of boisterous joy ... with which the large audience interacted to the point that they moved into the arena of the amphitheater and filled it with dance and joy." Under the headline "Hip-Hop on the South Theater while the North Theater celebrated popular traditions," Arabic daily Al-Rai said that Ozomatli rendered the arena of the South Theater into a dance floor where the mostly youthful audience danced to their music. The report, which also featured a photo of the band and the dancing audience, described Ozomatli's music mixture and mentioned their regional tour. Under the banner headline "The American Ozomatli performs its music: a crazy artistic mixture" splashed across the top of the page with two huge color photos, Arabic daily Al-Ghad carried a report about Ozomatli's performance focusing on the "immediate" interaction between the band and the audience, as Ozomatli turned the arena into a dance floor. The report mentioned that this was the first American participation in Jerash Festival in twenty years. The report also featured background information about the band. Jordanian Television broadcast a report about the Ozomatli concert in Jerash on its morning show on July 27, which recapped the Jerash Festival events. The four-minute report showed cheerful crowds dancing to the band's diverse music. Two days before their concert at the Jerash Festival, two band members did a ten-minute interview on a local English language radio station, Play 99.6 FM. The interview was broadcast live during the morning drive

show, which attracts thousands of listeners, both students and young professionals. The band talked about its music, its message of peace and justice, and its feelings about touring the region. The PAO also talked about the reason behind bringing a band such as Ozomatli, which represents the United States in all its diversity.

IMPACT

¶7. Ozomatli's visit to Jordan demonstrated Embassy Amman's ongoing commitment to bringing American cultural events to culturally-neglected regions of the country, and especially to reaching younger and more diverse audiences. Ozomatli's rapport with young people and humble approach to their audiences won them many converts and garnered tremendous good will for American culture. One comment posted on a popular blog after the Jerash show said: "They are inarguably THE best live act I have ever seen, aside from being amazingly down-to-earth and knowing exactly what moves a crowd.. hats off for Ozo, good stuff..." Another young boy commented after the performance in Aqaba that "Ozomatli sweetened Aqaba tonight." More than 3000 people attended the two large concerts and four outreach performances. Overall, the program supported MPP goals of expanding mutual understanding and combating radicalism through outreach.

¶8. Cost-share: Ozomatli visited Jordan as part of a regional tour which also included Tunis and Egypt. The tour was funded by a Department of State grant that totaled 69,021 USD, distributed among the three countries. In addition to this grant, PA Amman provided program support of 8,000 USD, covering expenses related to promotion and advertising and support services such as equipment rental. PA Amman obtained sponsorships of the program from local partners that amounted to 59,000 USD. This included: sponsorship by two major radio stations (Fann FM in Arabic and Play 99.6 in English), which launched promotion campaigns of a value of 20,000 USD; the Jerash Festival contributed approximately 25,000 USD towards performance fees, hotel rooms in Amman, and sound equipment rental; a local design and printing firm fully sponsored the design and the printing of flyers and posters, valued at approximately 7,000 USD; the 5,000 USD performance fee for the concert in Aqaba was sponsored by Tala Bay, a real estate development corporation; and 2,000 USD worth of hotel rooms in Aqaba was sponsored by ASEZA (the Aqaba Special Economic Zone Authority).

¶9. Amman strongly endorses Ozomatli. They have outstanding musical talent and are also ideal cultural ambassadors who were eager to meet people, and talk about their music as well issues they find important in America. They were generous with their time and

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flexible in the face of an incredibly demanding schedule. PA Amman thanks them and would also like to thank R, NEA/PPD, and ECA for their support of this program. Finally, we thank Embassies Tunis, Cairo and Beirut for their hard work in supporting this initiative. We believe that it was worthwhile in terms of the number of people the program reached, and the positive message that Ozomatli shared through its music and interactions with thousands of young people. Photos may be found on U.S. Embassy Amman's website at: <http://amman.usembassy.gov>. Additionally, their tour in Jordan was videotaped by a professional videographer whose tapes will be forwarded to Washington as soon as editing is complete.

HALE